



Elder D. Todd Christofferson

A Conversation on “The Journey to Lead Like the Savior”

November 6, 2013


1. INTRODUCTION

BROTHER BEN PORTER Brothers and sisters, we want to welcome you to our Leadership Enrichment Series today. Good to see so many of you here. We have a number of others that have joined us right now down at the ROB and Distribution and Beehive and a little bit down in Brazil today. So we have quite an attendance all over the Church. We want to welcome with us Elder D. Todd Christofferson, who is in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who will be with us today. We’re excited to have that conversation with him in regards to leadership, the Leadership Pattern, and making those changes in our own life to become more like the Savior and to lead more like the Savior.

Brothers and sisters, most of you are aware by now that the Leadership Pattern was developed in response to a conversation, a question that was asked by the Human Resource Committee, the First Presidency. It was a discussion about leadership and the kinds of leaders that we needed in the future. And the question that came up was “What kind of a leader do we need for the future?” And as a response to that particular question, we went to work to get that question answered. And it came out in the form of what we call now the Leadership Pattern, which was developed by members of the Human Resource Committee and the Twelve and also the Presiding Bishopric. Even today we have a lot of strong support for the Leadership Pattern, and from the conversations that I’m in with the leaders from the HRC and the Bishopric and the Twelve, we continue to focus on the Leadership Pattern, particularly in relation to those three talents around leading like the Savior, acting under the direction, and aligning with the Brethren, which we’ll talk about here today.

So today we want to spend a little bit of time talking about the core of the Leadership Pattern, particularly in relation to leading like the Savior. Over the course of my career outside of Church employment, I have worked with a number of corporations around the globe in establishing what they would call the leadership pattern or leadership competencies or attributes for their organization. There are some of the talents that we have that are similar to that, but there are clearly three talents that set us apart from the rest of the world that you’re not going to find in any other organization, and that’s lead like the Savior, act under the direction of the Spirit, and align with the Brethren.

That’s what sets us apart. And that’s what will be our focus going forward here next year, particularly, is to say all of these talents that the Brethren have identified are important. But these three set us apart. And every time I get into a discussion with the Brethren about what’s needed for leaders in this Church, in His kingdom, those three keep coming up. So that’s why we’re fortunate here to be able to have Elder Christofferson with us. He has been a member of the Human Resource Committee for a number of years until more recently and a new assignment that he got. But he was one of the original contributors of the Leadership Pattern, and that’s why we thought it was really going to be beneficial to be able to get his perspective, his deep perspective in terms of what’s needed in regards to leadership here in the Church. So



Elder Christofferson, again, thank you for being here, and we're looking forward to having a conversation with you.

So our format today, again, most of you are aware of that. We have 30 some-odd minutes to be able to ask Elder Christofferson a few questions—some in regards to his personal life and others in relation to the Leadership Pattern and leadership in general. So we'll spend that time doing that. And the remaining time will be open for questions—questions from the audience here and questions from our audience in other locations. We're going to do what we did last time and that is you see up there, there's an opportunity for you to text your questions in. And assuming that the technology works or assuming that I work, we'll be able to kind of intersperse questions that you have as an audience as well as questions from others in other locations.

For those of you in the audience, when we get to the Q&A, again, we'd just simply ask you to stand up, wait till the microphone is brought to you, and then speak your question clearly so that all can hear. After we have an opportunity to ask a number of questions, we'd love to ask Elder Christofferson if he would close by sharing with us his testimony. We'll conclude with the benediction given by Dennis Brimhall, who is the managing director of Family History. So having said that, let's begin our conversation with Elder Christofferson, and the first few questions have to do with more of a personal perspective that I think is always helpful. So, Elder Christofferson.

ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON Can I say first?

BROTHER PORTER Yeah.

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I'm grateful to be with you, with this group here in the theater in the Conference Center and those I imagine in my mind's eye in other locations. And I guess for the first time one from Brazil, right?

BROTHER PORTER We hope. Yes.

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON So if you're there, [speaking Portuguese] bem-vindos, todos vocês do Brasil.

BROTHER PORTER Oh, now we're going to have to do this every time. (Laughter)

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Keep the number of languages down to six. (Laughs)


BROTHER PORTER All right.

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Go ahead.

2. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

BROTHER PORTER So Elder Christofferson, before we get into the questions in relation to the Leadership Pattern, would you just share a little bit with us of where you were born, where did you grow up, where you went to school, college, and some of the work that you did, the jobs that you had before you got engaged full time with your Church callings.

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I was born not far from here, actually, American Fork, Utah. We lived in Pleasant Grove but American Fork had the hospital. And as they say, I was born there so I could be close to my mother. But my initial years, really up until teenage years, were there, Pleasant Grove and Lindon. And then my father took a job in New Jersey. He was a veterinarian and took a job with Squibb medical



company doing animal drug research and testing. And that moved us all to New Brunswick, into central New Jersey, and it was a dramatic change. I remember going from 9th grade where there were maybe two or three people I knew who were not members of the Church to 10th grade where I was the only one. And I look back on that now, the years in high school there, as my “Waters of Mormon.” I know New Jersey doesn’t always have a great reputation among states, but for me it’s wonderful because that’s where I really came to understand the fundamental truths of the gospel—that it wasn’t just nice; it was life and death. And I had many good friends, good people in and out of the Church, and it was all in all a very formative, positive formative experience. I went on a mission from there to Argentina. I had two mission presidents, Ronald Stone and Richard Scott. And now I have my second mission president still watching, still keeping an eye on me. (Laughs) It’s really not fair because your mission president knows all of your weaknesses and you don’t know any of the mission president’s because he’s perfect. (Laughs) But I came back, met my wife at BYU, familiar story. We graduated together on our first anniversary and then went to law school at Duke University.

My work following law school was a very interesting first job—first two years out of law school as a law clerk to a federal judge in Washington, D.C. And it turned out to be John J. Sirica, and it was right in the middle of all the Watergate proceedings. So I began with him just a couple months after the break in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate in Washington and went with him, stayed with him about a little over two years till the end of 1974 when the verdict came in on the second trial, what they called the “cover up trial.” So all through that was a tremendous experience, unique experience—the White House tapes and all the other things that came before the court. The judge has passed away now, but we had a great relationship, and I felt I learned a lot from someone who had a wealth of experience in the legal field and was just a good person. He said to me once, “I hope you appreciate this.” He said, “Not many law clerks get an experience like this.” And then he paused and he thought, “I guess not many judges do either.” (Laughs) But my professional career after that was with a law firm in Washington and then in house counsel with Hospital Corporation of America and then banks in Virginia and Tennessee and North Carolina. I was living in Charlotte, North Carolina, when I was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1993.

BROTHER PORTER So you’ve obviously been a General Authority for a long time. Perhaps some of the—

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON A long time. (Laughter)

BROTHER PORTER Some of the assignments that you’ve had during that long time?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Early on, I was assigned as a member of the Area Presidency in Mexico City. It was the Mexico South Area, and I was there for three years with my wife and our youngest two children, our two youngest sons. And then I came back in 1997 from that assignment and have been in Salt Lake at headquarters ever since that time. I never qualified for another assignment out of the country. But I was 10 years in the Presidency of the Seventy and now five years at this point in the Quorum of the Twelve and had assignments in family history and Church history and Central and South America, largely for supervisory assignments, human resources. It’s been a pretty good variety.

BROTHER PORTER And since you’ve been in the Quorum of the Twelve, some of your assignments now, your current assignment—I know you’re obviously not on the Human Resource Committee anymore, but recently—

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON All my assignments start with “P”—Public Affairs, Perpetual Education Fund, Priesthood Executive Council. And then the three areas of South America, which are Brazil, South America South, and South America Northwest. So it’s the continent.

3. WHY THE LEADERSHIP PATTERN?

BROTHER PORTER So Elder Christofferson, part of your responsibility over the last several years was on the Human Resource Committee, and you were there when the question was asked about the need for leadership in the Church now and in the future. And you were obviously one of the contributors when we went out and interviewed members of the Twelve and the First Presidency on the HRC and the Bishopric. I just wanted to kind of ask you to start out with, in regards to the Leadership Pattern, why is the Leadership Pattern so important to you, the Brethren, in terms of what we do here in our work setting here in the Church?


ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, to me it's a very good way of defining what kind of people we want to be. It coincides clearly with the gospel, with the aspirations we have to be disciples of Christ, to be Latter day Saints, and applies that in the setting of our professional lives, of our work day to day. But it keeps in the broader perspective, in the broader context of our life. It helps avoid compartmentalizing it, I would say, you know, your work life and the rest of your life. It makes it seamless, all one, that this really is how we want to live—the character we want to build in ourselves not just for what we do but for what we are and eventually aspire to be according to the gospel pattern.

It talks about being Spirit-guided, and that's what we want both here and in every other aspect of our lives. And it inspires, I think, to align ourselves, as it says, with the Brethren but with the leadership, with the direction that the Lord provides today—consistent with everything that's gone before but specific to the moment. So our lives, our leadership—but not just our leadership—our entire lives have that kind of direction that keeps us aligned with the Lord, keeps us moving in the pathway of developing His character in us and accomplishing His purposes in all aspects of our life. And then beyond that I think it talks a little bit about how we do that. You know, when you take the full range of what's incorporated in what you define as the Leadership Pattern, it's not just the what but somewhat of the how we go about accomplishing that in our preparing and in our learning, in our experience. All of it fits together to me in a seamless way.

BROTHER PORTER You know, in one of our interviews some time ago you made a comment that's kind of stuck in my mind, and you said, “At some future time the oversight that the Twelve will be able to offer will be less.” What does that mean to you in regards to the Leadership Pattern?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, I think it's clear to everyone that as the Church grows, if the Twelve stay at 12 and the First Presidency stays at 3, there's less opportunity for direct supervision. And I don't mean to say there arrives a certain day and all of a sudden there's less than there used to be. This is a continuum, and it's becoming less and less of that kind of hands on, direct supervision that maybe we got used to back when the Church was essentially Idaho, Utah, and Arizona and an outpost in California. But we're in a time and it's beginning now, or has begun some time back, but it's reaching a bit of a climax and will continue to be one in which we have to have people in your positions who can act with a greater degree of independence. I don't mean by that to say each one going his or her own way but that there's a unity, there's a cohesiveness, there's a progress toward the purpose that we all share without a lot of looking over the shoulder, without a lot of supervision.

When I was in Mexico I remember clearly in my mind one afternoon when I had a few minutes to think and being in a lovely place, which was very private and conducive to some meditating and thinking, it came to me very powerfully that as we grow, if we, at the level of the General Authorities, attempt to control every detail, or even a lot of the details, we'll lose overall



control. You can't be doing too many of those details and not lose the whole broad picture and the broad operation. And so we're going to have to provide some essential direction, some fundamental basics and principles, but we need people who can take that and, without a lot of supervision, implement it in a way that shows judgment and in a way that is what I call trustworthy—you know, that I don't have to worry, for example, that this person has a private agenda and that without a lot of supervision he'll go a certain way and is out of control. What we're hoping for, looking for, praying for are those that you can say, "Here it is, here are a few parameters and guidelines; make it happen," and have full confidence that they'll use good judgment and that that will be their agenda and that we can trust them.


President Hinckley used to worry—I remember hearing comments from him once in a while saying that there are those, or have been at least, those on staff who would try to capture the General Authority leadership that was assigned at a given time in a particular department or committee or whatever the case might be—capture them for their purpose, for their goal, for their vision instead of trying to receive and implement and elaborate the vision that came from the Brethren. So I think you see what I'm saying. In a word, there's unselfishness—there's not that enmity with others that pride brings. There's not the—how would you say it? Well, just bad judgment, abuse of authority, abuse of discretion. But rather a trustworthy disciple that can be entrusted like all of us hope we can be with the Lord's work. I remember always what President McKay used to say. He said, "To be loved is wonderful. To be trusted is even greater." And we love you all. We hope we can trust you all.

4. A CORE TALENT: LEAD LIKE THE SAVIOR

BROTHER PORTER That's good. As I've already mentioned in our introduction, there are three of the nine talents that really clearly set us apart from other organizations in the world. And those three talents are leading like the Savior, aligning with the Brethren, and acting under the direction of the Spirit. Could you just share with us some of your impressions about the importance of each of these three talents?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON They are critical. Each one. And they go together. When I think of leading like the Savior, one thing that comes to mind—it's all right to read scriptures, isn't it? Okay. This is something that has always been a favorite simple statement of mine in John chapter 8, if anyone wants to make a note of it. John 8 and 29. This is the Savior speaking: "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone." I think a key element of His leadership obviously was His connection with the Father, and He always gave glory to the Father, He always turned to Him, He always looked to the Father and prayed to Him and gave Him credit. And then He said, "[He] hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." I love that. "I do always those things that please him." And to me that was the key to His leadership, and if we were to lead in the same way, then we look at the Savior, we look at the Father, and we say, "I would always do the things that please Them." And maybe this isn't gospel that all would agree to, but I believe that it was that consistent desire and effort on His part to do what pleased the Father, to do His will, that saw Him through, saw the Savior through the Atonement.

Remember, He rarely talked about what that experience was like. And I don't know that you could even describe it, really. But in section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants He talks a little bit about what happened, what He felt in the Atonement, and said something about the "suffering [that] caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter




cup, and shrink” (verse 18). You remember the pleading: “Take this cup away. If there’s any way to do this, short of my having to drink this cup, please, Father, take this cup. Nevertheless, thy will be done, not mine” (see Mark 14:36). And so it sounds to me like He’s here even a bit surprised, I guess you could say, at the intensity and the depth of the suffering Himself and didn’t want to fail or shrink. And then He says what got Him through, in my view; He says, “Nevertheless, glory be to the Father.” I mean that intense desire to please the Father, to glorify the Father, enabled Him to see the Atonement through to its conclusion. “I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19). So leading as He did involves above everything else and underlying everything else that commitment to the will of God and doing the things that please Them.

Another aspect of that that comes to my mind is that He got the job done. I mean He was focused, if you will, if you could say it in those terms, on getting the job done. You know, whatever He was commanded to do or asked to do or needed to do, He saw it through to the conclusion and got the job done. He was focused on accomplishing what it was He had to accomplish. But in the process He, at the same time, focused on the welfare of those that He was working with, or who were working with Him, or who were assisting and helping Him. You know, He wasn’t so focused on the job that He forgot the people. He never neglected the people that were helping perform that task, and it was always a great interest in their welfare, in their being built up and in their progress, you know, not just His Apostles but everyone He could touch. It was never an excuse, I guess you could say, for Him to say, “This is so important I don’t have to worry about the welfare of those who are working with me. I’ve got to focus on making this or that happen.” There have been great leaders in the past, as you know, political and otherwise, that have accomplished great things, but they left in their wake a lot of broken people. And the Savior was just the opposite. He left in His wake people who were edified and built up and strengthened and made better in the process.

I like to say sometimes when I’m talking to leaders that in a way, as weak and imperfect as we are, it’s a wonder the Lord lets us touch anything. (Laughs) But He does, you know, and Him letting us help is what helps us grow. I think sometimes we’re like a little three year-old; he sees his dad painting a door and it looks like a lot of fun. So he runs up, “Dad, let me help, let me help.” And Dad’s thinking, “Well, I know what kind of help this will be.” But he loves him, so he gives him a brush and we’re there, if we’re this little child, painting as long as our attention span lasts, and then off we go and Dad’s left to fix the help. Sometimes I think that’s kind of how the Lord mops after us in a way when we make mistakes, but He’s always looking to build us as the work goes on. And in the end, of course, we are the work.

5. A CORE TALENT: ACT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SPIRIT

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON The second one was acting by the Spirit, right? It’s always been interesting to me to think that the Apostles, the ancient Apostles, had three years with the Lord—three full years, day in and day out with Him—in His miracles and His teaching and all of His activities and in private tutoring. I mean they had—can you imagine, three years with the Lord? And yet when He gave them the great commission to go out and teach the gospel to all the world, carry it to all the world, He said, “Wait until you receive the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1:4–8).” So even after three years of private tutoring by the Son of God they were not qualified or ready to go out until they had the Holy Ghost, which says to me, obviously, we need it for the same reasons. They needed the Holy Ghost to help them remember what they’d been taught. They needed the Holy Ghost to help them understand more fully what they already knew, what they



had received from Him. They needed the Holy Ghost as they went from place to place, partly to guide them, partly to inspire their words, partly to carry their words to the hearts of those who heard them, to bear witness of the truth of what they said, to magnify them with spiritual gifts beyond their own capacity, their natural capacity. In all these things they needed the Holy Spirit; we need it for the same reason, the same purposes.


But at the same time we have got to recognize that the Lord isn't making us dependent; He's magnifying us. And there may be times—Elder Scott and others have pointed this out, that there may be times in a person's life when the Lord says, "All right, you've had this experience, you should've learned this much by that experience, what the Spirit has taught you. Now go ahead and apply it without me or the Spirit directing or controlling. You just try it out, try your wings a little bit without an answer to your prayer right now. Just do your best on what you've learned and the experience you've had."

So there will be times when—you're all familiar with this—when maybe answers or detailed guidance doesn't come in something. And I believe what the Lord is saying to us is these familiar statements from section 58: "It is not meet that I should command in all things" (verse 26). In other words, it's not meet that I should always reveal exactly what you should do in a given moment. "For he that is compelled in all things ... is a slothful and not a wise servant. ... I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves" (verses 26–28). So I think our association with the Spirit, our working by the Spirit ought to be developing some power within us to have greater capacity to act of our own will and to bring to pass many good things. It's kind of a balance. I hope people don't misunderstand and say, "Well, you know, I've had the Holy Ghost blessing me for 10 years; I don't need Him anymore." We're always going to need that, but the Lord doesn't let it become a crutch. He's building us, not making us dependent through our interaction with the Spirit.

6. A CORE TALENT: ALIGN WITH THE BRETHREN

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON And then lastly, aligning with the Brethren. Let me give you a simple little experience that happened in my life. Years ago I was a stake president. I was visiting Salt Lake for general conference, staying at my uncle and aunt's home whose basement bedroom they let me use while I was here. And I went to, they had at that time kind of a leadership session or some meeting where I was expecting and I'd been led to expect that there was going to be an announcement of a certain change in organization in a pattern of doing something. I don't want to get into any more detail than that. And I thought it was needed; I thought it was past time that it be adopted, and this was going to happen at that particular general conference. This was back in the 1980s, I guess. Well, it didn't happen. You know, the announcement wasn't made. The change didn't come. And it still hasn't, by the way. (Laughs) But I haven't given up. (Laughs) But there was this immediate feeling, a feeling of criticism in my heart, in my mind about the Brethren failing to take this action that was timely and overdue. And instantly I felt the Spirit leave me. As soon as that feeling came into my heart, the Spirit was gone. I could feel it. I could feel the difference, and I was in this little bedroom and I dropped down to my knees and started praying to get it back, and it took a little praying but it came back. And it just taught me that the Spirit will not coexist or will not be present, I guess you could say, in one who is very critical—maybe even mildly critical.

It doesn't mean that we don't want feedback—speaking for the Brethren—that we don't want feedback or don't want to hear varying opinions and disagreement. No, we do. We want honest



feedback, honest work, honest analysis. But there's a difference between that and saying, "You know, you're wrong, you're off track, and I won't follow." I hope you can see the distinction in that attitude, because the Spirit won't be there if that's what comes. Anyway, I think aligning with the Brethren simply means that you really are looking out for the good of everything, the good of the Church, the good of the work across the world, that you're trying to build Zion and that you will make the sacrifices, you'll sublimate somewhat personal advantage or prominence for the good of the work. Elder Dean L. Larsen, formerly in the Seventy, when he was President of the Europe Area, was asked—I don't know if it was a test question or what, but he was asked, "If we could give you ten million more dollars for your budget, what would you use it for?" And he said, "I would send it to South America for some new chapels because that's where the greatest need is." And I thought, there's a man who has the whole work in mind, who sees the bigger picture and is not looking for some personal advantage or prominence.


I like the idea; maybe a way of looking at this is as somebody says: "I would like to take proposals to the Brethren such that they never have to say no. It's sufficiently well thought out, it's sufficiently in line with what needs to happen. It coincides with the work across the world. It's the right thing. And I don't want them ever to have to say no to me because I'm aligned. I'm there."

7. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE TAKES TIME

BROTHER PORTER So just kind of switching a little bit in terms of our conversation here, I think we would all hope that the Leadership Pattern is more than a piece of paper or a poster or a PowerPoint slide up on the screen that has some great principles written on it. I think what we're interested in is that we align our behavior, our thinking, our behavior to those talents, to those behaviors that support those talents. Last time you and I met we talked about that it's really about becoming—a journey of becoming. Not only in terms of becoming like the Savior but even leading like the Savior is a bit of a journey. It doesn't happen all at once. Any thoughts on that, that it would be helpful for all of us so that we're not just seeing this as a nice thing to have, but we actually begin to align our behavior toward the pattern?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well it's a big goal when you talk about the pattern; it really is something very large to aspire to in anyone's life. And I would hope that nobody gets discouraged if they feel like they're not reaching that ideal quickly enough. Even the Savior, though He was without sin, still had things to develop and progress in life, in His ministry. I remember section 93. This is John, the Apostle John, speaking about the Savior: "I ... saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace; and he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (verses 11–13). And I think that's the pattern, His pattern. It can also be our pattern—that is, we'll progress step by step, grace to grace, and line upon line as we sometimes say. But don't be discouraged if you're not there instantly. Our whole life really is an effort to follow in His footsteps, to develop His character as I said earlier. And it will happen over time. And to me that's a promise, really. If you make the effort, more will be added and you can continue to grow.

The other thing I'd say in that regard is we ought to be attentive and learn from our mistakes. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin to me was the personification of goodness—just a good man. We overlapped one year in the Quorum of the Twelve, and I felt a little cheated that he left so soon. But he had the practice of taking a few minutes after every assignment—a talk, or an interview, you know, whatever the assignment might be that he had in his capacity as an Apostle—and he would analyze his performance so to speak—how had it gone—and try to remember or identify



where he could've done better. Can you imagine every event, every activity he would take a few minutes or just pause long enough to think, "What did I do? How could it be improved?" I believe that's part of why he was such a pure disciple. And so I would just say let's pay attention and not be discouraged if we're not there in a single step, but learn from experience and have confidence in the promise the Lord is going to add grace for grace.

8. EXPRESSING GRATITUDE INVITES HELP FROM THE SPIRIT

BROTHER PORTER You know, Elder Christofferson, when I look at the nine talents, some of them tend to be more operational in nature, and you could probably go to a training program or receive coaching from your boss in regards to those kind of operational talents. But some of those talents are obviously, like "Lead like the Savior," different in a higher kind. It's not a matter of going to a training program to learn it like you would time management or delegation. It's to become like the Savior. I'm assuming that there's some tutelage of the Spirit that's at play here. And so just any thoughts about what you think we need to do or be more aware of, utilize, or whatever, in terms of being taught by the Spirit in regards to those three talents we talked about. Any thoughts on that?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I like the way you say it, you know, being taught by the Spirit, because it is a way of learning; it is a way of instruction. And I would say first that we can't dictate to God; we can't dictate to the Spirit. We can't control the Spirit in the sense, you know, we say, "Tell me this now and this now and in this place, and I want this answer and you're going to tell me in this way." Doesn't work that way. We're always to be open and ready to receive, but it's the Lord and the Spirit who tell us or decide how and when and what gets communicated and what gets taught. We need to leave that in Their hands, so to speak, and be willing simply to be open always and willing to receive. I'm not quite sure how this all figures in, but there's something that has to do with gratitude in all of this as well. I think if we are grateful for what comes, one of the ways we demonstrate that gratitude is by taking it seriously. Elder Scott talks about his own experience in making notes, in making a record of what comes by the impressions of the Spirit, and if you'll do that, more will come. You know, if he's indicating by that that he values it, it's precious, he will use it, he'll remember it, then more comes.

Elder Robert Hales talked about an experience he had as a mission president in England years ago. He had a sister from France who was assigned to the mission, and she had a real challenge with English. And she progressed to a certain level but couldn't seem to get much further and asked for a blessing from him. He gave her a blessing, and she made some headway and then plateaued again at a certain level and came back for another blessing. So he said he put his hands on her head and nothing came. No impression. He lifted his hands back and thought a moment and then it came to him: "If she will express gratitude for what she has already received, I have more to give her." And I thought, what a powerful message that is as that applies to me, to everybody. There's something in being grateful and in expressing that gratitude that brings the Holy Spirit and more gifts, more help from the Spirit. So I would hope that—I'm speaking to myself as well as everybody—that there would always be a consciousness of what comes, of prizing and valuing what comes, and an expression of gratitude for what comes, knowing we don't control it, but we can express gratitude and ask for more. And I believe in the end the Lord gives us according to our desires. You know, what we really want is what we get.

BROTHER PORTER We had a leadership meeting with the department heads last week, and we were talking about going on the journey and in our preparation starting with asking the question “What lack I yet?” And somebody raised their hand, one of the leaders, and said, “But even before that question is probably asking the question ‘Do I want to change? Am I ready to change?’” And this gets to your comment about the desire. But I think what I’m hearing you say is that one of the things that creates a desire is starting with gratitude for what has already been given.


ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I think that’s how it interacts. It is part of desire. You’ve enlightened me a bit on that. But it’s something you can pray about really. I mean when you say, “What lack I yet? What’s there in my life that needs to be improved or something maybe I’ve done that I need to repent of and I may not even be aware of? What needs to be put right that’s amiss?” I remember asking that in a prayer some years ago, very sincerely asking for the Lord to tell me, you know, “Is there something you see that I need to do or change?” It’s a very dangerous prayer because you get answers. (Laughs) And I got answers in this one. There were three things identified. It was very interesting. I’d forgotten every one of them, and they were all very minor little things that I would’ve thought that with the passage of time, it wouldn’t matter anymore. You know, time passes, things fade in importance, and it just would’ve gone away. But it’s taught me that things don’t just go away, even small things. You do have to repent. You do have to put it right. And then there is forgiveness; there is resolution. It’s not hard when it’s something small, but it does have to be dealt with.

Things in the eternal economy don’t just get swept under the rug. But the Lord is willing to help you deal with it. His grace is there and it will be done. So don’t just assume time does it. You’ve got to take the action. And I had to call two people, speak to one personally and another by phone call, and confess a small offense and say, “I’m the guilty party, I’m sorry, I hope you’ll forgive me.” And they forgave me very promptly and it was easily resolved, but it had to be resolved. But the thing was that the Lord will help us in that regard; He will answer those prayers if we really want to know, as you said, “what lack I yet?” He’ll tell us.

And as this call that I have today came to me, and earlier as a Seventy and on other occasions where I felt great inadequacy and felt wonderfully, terribly motivated to ask that question, to prepare to serve in something I felt I wasn’t capable of, the Lord answered the question in spades. You really see yourself as He sees you—see as we are seen and know as we are known. And it’s not in the sense of saying “you’re nothing” or “you’re totally flawed” or “you can’t do it.” It’s “We’ll work on these things; we’ll fix this. I can help. My grace is sufficient. But you need to deal with it.” And so I’m a believer that the Lord will answer those prayers and help you deal with whatever you need to deal with.

10. SHARE WHAT IS LEARNED WITH OTHERS

BROTHER PORTER Elder Christofferson, we’re going to move to the Q&A here, but just one last question for you. Obviously it’s taking this pattern and as we’ve talked about kind of identifying something to work on, realizing it’s a journey, takes time, one step at a time type of thing, and go out and experience it. Go out and act on it. Probably the last step of that is to say, “What did I learn from my experience, and how can I share that to strengthen other people?” Any



thoughts that you have in terms of kind of learning from your experiences and recording that down and then finding a way to share that and strengthen other people?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, that's really what the scriptures are, isn't it—that people have, under inspiration, recorded what they've learned and they have remembered and shared with us, with everyone else what it is that has come to them by experience and by revelation. And that's where we get the scriptures for the most part. That and answers to specific questions. But I think part of the key is that we really care about each other like the Savior cares about each one of us, that we want to see one another succeed, that we're open to helping, even if that seems to move them ahead of us in a way, that we're still willing to do that and to share whatever we can.

To me, one of the great joys I have in serving in the Quorum of the Twelve is that I feel that attitude on the part of everyone in the Quorum. When I look around, I see 11 men who want me to succeed, who want to help me, who want to lift me, who are happy if I get some recognition or honor or succeed in any way, even if that means the light and the spotlight went to me instead of him or someone else. They don't care about that anymore, if they ever did. That competition isn't there. And there's that happiness that everyone's prospering, and nobody feels like someone else's blessing takes away from theirs or that someone else's recognition came at their expense, or even if it did, they don't care. It's that love for one another that I think is the essence of Christlike love and taking joy and being able to make a positive difference in someone else's life.


11. HELPING OTHERS TO SUCCEED

BROTHER PORTER Well, brothers and sisters, let's take some time now to ask Elder Christofferson any questions that might be on your mind in regards to the Leadership Pattern—maybe more particular in the area of leading like the Savior, acting under the direction, and aligning with the Brethren. And also, any questions you might have about the journey of becoming—becoming like the Savior, leading like the Savior. So I think we have our people ready to pass out the microphone. Please stand up, wait for the microphone, state your question, and let's ask some questions to Elder Christofferson.

MALE PARTICIPANT Thank you. Elder Christofferson, what suggestions do you have for balancing the high expectations that the gospel has for us but yet leading with patience and long-suffering and gentleness, especially in a work setting?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Good question. Again, I think we look to the example of the Godhead. I remember beginning one conference talk with the sentence “Our God is a God of high expectations.” And truly, He is, but also a God of great long-suffering and patience and willingness to help. And I just think the key is looking for ways to help, looking for ways to make someone successful. We want to be successful, we look for ways to improve ourselves, but we also have to be looking at everyone we influence or lead and say, “What do we need to do, what do I need to do, what can I do that would help them prosper or improve?”

I say when I am assigned to reorganize a stake, call a new stake presidency, I say, “Brethren your job is to be a servant leader. Your job is to clear the rocks out of the road in front of the bishops and the elders quorum presidents and the Relief Society presidents. If you make them successful, automatically you are successful, by definition.” And that, to me, is consistent with what the Lord said to His Apostles. Let me see, it's in Mark. You're familiar with this. This is



an occasion where the quorum wasn't as united as the one I was just talking about. And there was a little bit of jealousy when James and John asked if they could sit on the Lord's right hand and left hand in the kingdom. And it says in Mark 10: "When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John" (verse 41).

But the point was the Savior says to them: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

"And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all.

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (verses 42–45).

It's worth it for us to give a little of our life to help somebody else overcome a challenge, be better, learn something, take away an obstacle in front of them, whatever to make them succeed.

12. SINCERE QUESTIONS AND SEEKING THE SPIRIT


BROTHER PORTER Other questions? Way up at the top there, okay?

MALE PARTICIPANT Elder Christofferson, I was wondering if you could suggest ways for us to check ourselves to see if we're aligning with the Brethren.

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Just come see me. (Laughter) Well, that's a worthy aspiration, and I suppose there are various ways of doing it, but obviously much of it is paying attention to what may be said publicly, particularly in general conference settings where things have been carefully thought out before they're expressed, usually, and everybody's seeking inspiration and guidance and the will of the Lord in what's said. But he raises a good question. I don't know what HR can do to help in that process but I believe you can. I just think there are ways that things get communicated to you, things will get communicated to those that are part of councils, the executive councils of the Church, those who have some direction in departments. My experience has been there are points of inspiration that come along in those settings that can then be shared, and if it's not confidential I hope you'll be willing to share as widely as you can what comes to you through those lines even indirectly. But part of it would be also in asking questions.

Much of what I feel inspired about comes to me in response to questions. And I hope you'll all feel free to ask lots of questions to those around you—your peers, those who are supervising your work, and any others. Go ahead, raise those questions. If you really want to know, ask sincere questions, and nobody resents that. Nobody feels like they're being challenged. Just that if you want to know, we ought to share. So it will come in a lot of different ways. I appreciate the desire, frankly. And again, the Lord responds to our desires, and if you're looking, if you're alert to it, it will come through others, it will come in response to questions, it will come through preplanned direction. And sometimes it will come just in the course of prayer, in the course of asking there as well.

MALE PARTICIPANT What would you teach us about acting under the direction of the Spirit in our daily work? There's a temptation, especially after you've had an assignment for some time, to fall into a pattern of doing your work and maybe even becoming very successful at it, and just



following those processes and procedures of daily tasks and maybe a temptation to seek the Spirit each day in that work. What would you teach us about that?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Again, the main issue is desire. If you want that, it will come. And my experience is I think like yours, that most of the inspiration, most of the insights and revelation and new grasp or new vision of things comes while you're about the work, while you're in the process, while you're on the path as opposed to sitting and waiting for something and then acting. Most of it comes while you're acting, while it's happening. And so if you're wanting to know how to do something better or what would please the Lord in even mundane things, I believe that comes to you, if that's the desire of your heart and you're about the work as you go along.


It's always a temptation for me or anyone else, I think, once they get comfortable, as you said, in a particular way of doing things, to be quite content and be closed to any other way of going about it or changing your emphasis or priorities and so forth. So it does take some effort. And one of the ways you can manifest that desire and ask the Lord's guidance is to pray at the beginning of each day that—I think the phrase is that “he would consecrate your efforts to your good.” Yeah, 2 Nephi 32 and 9: “Behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.”

It's very helpful to begin the day, look at your agenda, as much as you can anticipate it, and pray specifically that He would consecrate your part, your performance, in this and this and this as you go through the appointments and activities of the day. Pray about them specifically. Ask that He would consecrate them to your good and for His glory and that what you do would be a blessing to others and glorify Him as well as bless yourself. And I think if you're specific about each activity—I do this in the morning; I look at each of the meetings I'm going to be in and my interviews and all the rest and ask that He would consecrate them. And I think then, if that's your feeling, if that's your prayer, then a lot of revelation and promptings will come to you as to how to do things and maybe what to change if you need to change.

13. THE WORK OF THE LORD—BE THE BEST WE CAN

BROTHER PORTER So Elder Christofferson, one of the questions that was texted in. And I'm assuming this has to do with our three talents of lead like the Savior, align with the Brethren, and act under the direction of the Spirit. The question is: These are all spiritual concepts. Help us understand how to better infuse them into our work setting. Or how can we better infuse them into our work setting?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, it's important to realize, for all of us, that any honest work, anything that builds is the work of the Lord. And I'm talking about electricians and plumbers and everybody else. Anything we do that has value and that makes a contribution for good is the work of the Lord. And I believe anyone is entitled to call upon His blessing in their work and in being better, becoming better, because it is, in the end, His work. It's all part of His purpose in the mortal life, the mortal experience and what that leads to. So I don't feel bad in any way or reluctant—I didn't in my law practice—in asking for His blessing upon that work and upon my professional capacity and talent.



We who have the particular stewardships that we do in the Church, in the kingdom of God, and are contributing to the building of Zion in all things, really ought to be professionally some of the best there are in the world. I mean the talents that people use in business and in all other professions and endeavors in life where they develop great talents and are experts, that's great and we ought to be among the best with them in that, plus adding the Spirit and the divine work that we're about in the end. Physical facilities, ICS—all those things have a divine purpose in this kingdom. And it behooves us to be the best we can. I think we need to take up our cross daily, to be the disciples we ought to be, but not excuse ourselves by saying we're good disciples therefore I can be mediocre in occupational and professional talents. We've got to really do whatever we can, whatever we can grab hold of in the way of seminars and training and experience and tutoring and mentoring and all the rest to really be professionally the best we can as well as spiritually. You wouldn't disagree with that?

BROTHER PORTER All right, any other questions out there?

MALE PARTICIPANT I really enjoyed when you spoke about that it's any wonder that the Lord lets us touch anything with all of our imperfections. But there's definitely times that He allows the imperfect to act and times that He brings the work about Himself to ensure that it happens in His own and proper way. Would you give us any guiding principles that would help us as leaders as we're seeking to do this, as we're trying to balance obviously giving work, but also ensuring that there's parts that we take as leaders in this work?


ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, I wouldn't worry too much about whether the Lord gets enough to do, if we leave Him enough to do, if that's your question. I'm not sure I'm interpreting it right. But the key is to be humble, to recognize that as much as we can do, certainly we ought to do. But as much as that may be, it still pales in comparison to what He's doing. And we recognize that what makes it possible for us to contribute is in large measure beyond our desire and efforts, His grace. And I believe even if our contributions are pretty small in comparison to what's going on on the other side of the veil or in the grand scheme of things in the cosmos, it's still appreciated.

Our efforts really are to put on the altar, on the Lord's altar, an offering that He would consider worthy, that He would respect. And sometimes that's not very much. Sometimes all that can be is a desire because we have no capacity beyond that in a given thing. But whatever it is, whatever we can legitimately offer, whatever we can put on the altar, up to and including ourselves, if it's all we can do, He has respect of that. He accepts it as worthy. And there's no higher honor can come to any man or woman than that the Lord found their offering worthy. And we're not comparing offerings among ourselves; we're just about what can we do, and if we do it, He's pleased.

14. PROVIDING HONEST FEEDBACK

BROTHER PORTER Elder Christofferson, another text says: "Elder Christofferson has taught about chastening, change, and repentance. As we examine our own need to seek what lack I yet, how do we as leaders also appropriately chasten or give honest feedback as the Savior would?"

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON Well, the key is that it's honest. It's a great disservice to someone, I think, not to give it. The Lord suggests we need to reprove betimes (in a timely way) with sharpness, and I interpret that sharpness sometimes to mean clarity, focus, accurate feedback, accurate correction in a timely way. And if it's done with a motivation we've already talked about of



lifting, of taking away obstacles, of helping someone else be what they can be, then often or almost always it will be received in that spirit. So it needs to be timely, it needs to be clear and honest, and it needs to be with love, and then as a scripture says, “showing forth afterwards an increase of love” (D&C 121:43), just in case there’s any doubt that you meant simply to tear down in a critical way as opposed to build up and help improve.

I think the Lord was a master at that. He reproved as He needed to, but always for the sake of a person’s progress, individual progress. But those to me are the keys. Those elements have to be there, and it has to be real love. It has to be love unfeigned. And if a person, I think if you don’t feel that love for someone, it’s not something you can manufacture inside yourself. It’s a spiritual gift. And in Moroni it says you can ask for it. You can ask for the pure love of Christ. Anybody who is His disciple can pray for and receive the gift of charity, the pure love of Christ that comes through the Holy Ghost. And you don’t have to create it out of nothing. It can be your gift. And with that, I think people will respond and will feel loved and encouraged and appreciated.


15. CONTRIBUTE THROUGH COUNCILS

BROTHER PORTER Another question? There we go.

FEMALE PARTICIPANT I’m here. Recently in general conference Elder Andersen gave a really great talk about contribution and women’s contribution. So being a woman here at the Church and moving forward as we progress and work together in unity, what is the hope or expectation for women to contribute in our individual roles? I know sometimes as women we’re afraid to speak up because there are so many great priesthood leaders that do take the lead. So what can we do to help contribute and further the work equally in our positions?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I’m talking of the Brethren now, where I’m interacting pretty regularly. There really is almost an intense desire, I would say, to get the contribution and the input of women. And it’s not just a desire to have that be a perception alone, you know, that everybody should think that, but that really is a sincere hope and desire. The handbook, I can’t remember the section, I can’t quote that to you, but it’s the one that talks about councils. I think it’s chapter 4 of the second handbook. And it talks about inviting the contribution of the women, that their perspective is sometimes different than that of men. I said, “Sometimes?” (Laughs) But it’s true. There are insights that don’t come otherwise, that we lose. There are contributions that we don’t get if women are either afraid to make them or are discouraged from offering them. And frankly, we can’t get to where we need to go as a Church without that contribution. So I would just say to all, we ought to see each other equally valuable. We ought to be open, and not every idea that anybody expresses is always a good one or is always going to be adopted.

I was on a committee years ago that was talking about our use of the Internet, and this was before I was a member of the Twelve, but one of the Twelve was the chair. And I proposed a brilliant idea. And he reacted to it, analyzed the idea, basically by slicing it to pieces. And it fell dead on the table. And somebody afterwards said, “Boy, I hope you weren’t offended. You know, he’s so bright and he calls it as he sees it.” And I said, “No, no, he wasn’t speaking of me or my value; he was talking about the merits of the idea. And when he was through, I agreed; it deserved to die.” But all I’m saying is that not everything everybody says is brilliant and not every idea is going to be adopted. But neither men nor women ought to have any fear about sharing and being willing to let things roll around in a council setting and survive or die as the case might be. Just be part of it and make a contribution



We're looking not just for your contribution, so to speak, based on your particular expertise in your current employment or current assignment; we want your life experience. We want the benefit of your service in the Church over the years. We want the benefit of what happens, what you've learned at home, and all of the gifts and talents and the spiritual gifts that you have. All of that we want you to bring and contribute here and not feel limited, men or women, in what we look for and the contribution we hope for. So please don't be discouraged that not everyone has that vision yet. Keep pressing. You have that vision among the First Presidency and the Twelve, that value, and we hope that that's part of aligning with the Brethren, that the contribution of the sisters is appreciated the way we appreciate it.

16. AN INTEGRAL LIFE


BROTHER PORTER Elder Christofferson, one last question, probably coming from Brazil, I'm not sure. But I'd like to ask this question and then have time for your testimony before our closing prayer. Elder Christofferson, was there ever a time during your work career when you experienced a turning point that caused you to become even more committed to be like the Savior and bring others to Him?

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I wish I had a longer time to think about that because I'm sure there have been more than one such occasion. I'm trying to bring a specific one to mind. I guess one that comes to mind, this is one I was familiar with, had some part in, but it was a litigation between two families both in the same church. They weren't LDS, but a different congregation, a different denomination, and they had a legal dispute between them. And it was interesting to see how one excused everything that he did, some of which was rather underhanded, as saying, "That's business. That's just business. That's how it works," and he felt like he could compartmentalize it so that business was over here and his participation in the congregation was somewhere else. And the other was just the opposite. I mean, his life had to be integral and he couldn't see doing anything in business that wasn't consistent with what he felt and talked and said and lived on Sunday. And seeing that contrast reinforced, I believe, in me, the desire to have an integral life to make sure that I didn't fall prey to the temptation to separate things in compartments and to excuse things because that was business, that was church, this is family, that's something else. It's all one, or you're just not of a Christlike character.

17. CLOSING TESTIMONY

ELDER CHRISTOFFERSON I appreciate the time I've had with you. I feel like I've learned a little in the process, some insights that have come to me as we've talked, as I've talked too much. But it reminds me of something Elder Marion G. Romney said on one occasion. He said, "I know when I've been speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit because I learn something." And I feel like the spirit you bring has helped me learn a few things. I hope it's been helpful to you and worth your time. But it's in the end a deep privilege all of us have to be in the Lord's cause. Whatever the burden, whatever the weight and the challenges and the sacrifices, in the end, it is a great privilege.

And I want you to know that I have always believed that the Lord guides this Church because it's His. It's the vehicle that He has created to reach all of our Father's children with the blessings of the gospel and the plan of happiness. And so He obviously has an interest in our success because it is that means, that medium, that vehicle. And He loves all of them, His children, all of



them without exception. But I would add to my belief now a witness, both of the Spirit and of experience, that He is in fact the head of the Church. I know He placed President Monson here as the President. I had a witness of that when President Monson stood to speak for the first time as President of the Church. He stood at that pulpit and I perceived, I think almost saw, the mantle come upon his shoulders as he opened his mouth. So I know he's put there by the Lord and maintained there. And I honor him in that role.

But the head of the Church is Jesus Christ, and I bear witness that He is an active leader, that He's personally very much involved in the direction of the work. I think His hand is upon you. I think He has intervened directly and indirectly in your service. I want to thank you on behalf of all the Brethren for what you do and for your excellence. But He is the one who stands at the head and directs the work daily. And I've seen that hand—sometimes I'm sure I've missed it, or not been aware of it, but it's nonetheless real. And He is real. He is the resurrected Lord, and His Resurrection makes all the difference. Everything changes because He is literally resurrected. And He is the Son of God. He is the Redeemer. He lives. It's your privilege to bear witness of Him. It's my privilege to bear witness of Him and His reality as the Son of God who makes everything else possible, every good thing. And of Him I bear the witness that Joseph bore, that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.